Met Office

March 2015

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

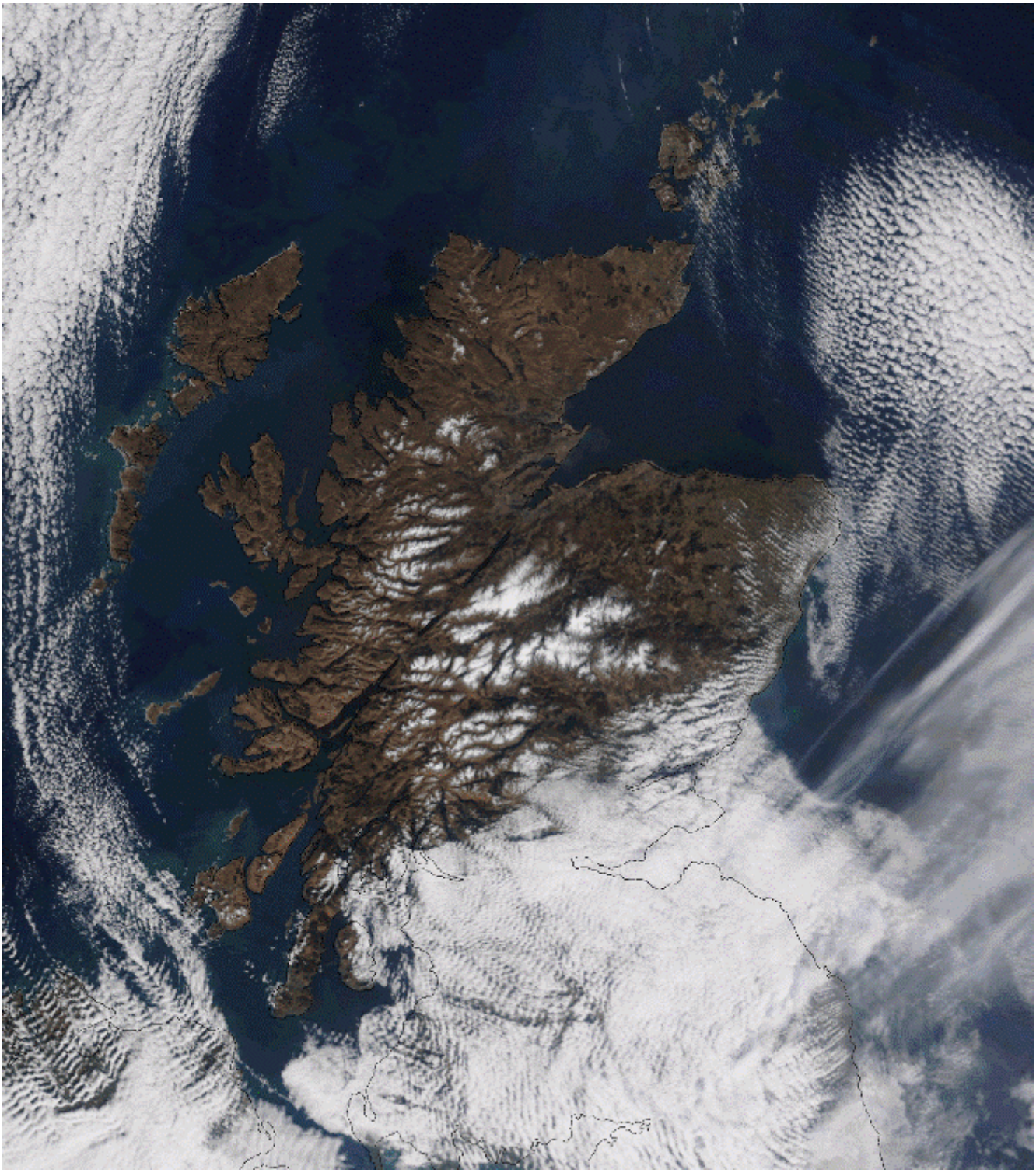
UK overview

At the start of the month, the UK was in an unsettled Atlantic weather type bringing rain and strong wind at times. A succession of active depressions affected mainly northern and western areas from 5th to 12th, after which pressure built and the weather was more settled for most. The final week was rather unsettled with rain or showers generally and some very strong winds. It was generally driest in southern areas.

The UK mean temperature for March 2015 was 5.5 °C, which is 0.1 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average. North-east of Scotland was mildest relative to average. Aberdeenshire and the south-eastern half of England were drier than average, with parts of central southern England having less than half their average rainfall, but western Scotland and north-west England had quite a wet month. The overall UK rainfall total was exactly 100% of average. Sunshine was well above normal in many areas, and the UK received 120% of average sunshine hours.

A maximum temperature of 17.4 °C was recorded at Santon Downham (Suffolk) on the 7th. A minimum temperature of -7.4 °C was recorded at Aboyne (Aberdeenshire) on the 15th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 7th, 123.6 mm of rain fell at Glendessary (Highland). A wind gust of 97 mph was recorded at Capel Curig (Gwynedd) on the 30th. A snow depth of 19 cm was recorded at Ardtalnaig (Perthshire) at 0900 GMT on the 3rd.

This satellite image on Sunday 15 March 2015 shows snow cover across the Scottish mountains, with high pressure over Scandinavia bringing light easterly winds across the UK. Copyright Met Office / NASA



This image on Friday 20 March 2015 shows the view of the partial solar eclipse from Met Office Headquarters in Exeter. The partial eclipse obscured over 80% of the sun across England and more than 90% across parts of Scotland. Copyright Stewart Turner

Weather impacts

Snow and ice in the north during the first four days of the month caused some travel disruption. However, from 6th to 8th there was a greater concern of flooding in western parts of Scotland, exacerbated by snowmelt. Further active depressions over the next five days brought more heavy rain and strong winds over north-western parts of the country. Various roads were closed for a time, and on 12th large boulders loosened by the wet weather fell on the A82 near Loch Ness causing lengthy diversions for road traffic.

After a quieter spell of weather, snowfall again spread across upland areas of the north of the UK during the 25th to 26th.

It was windy generally during the last six days of the month, especially late on the 30th and into the 31st, with widespread gales over southern and central parts of the country and some localised damage. There were reports of fallen trees, closures of the Severn bridges and Dartford Crossing and some disruption to rail services from fallen trees. The roof of the Silverstone motor racing circuit was damaged by high winds.

Wintry conditions continued through March across Scotland's mountains with extensive snow cover and blizzards at times at higher elevations.

England diary of highlights

The month began with cold weather bringing some wintry showers, but it became more settled by the end of the first week under the influence of high pressure. It became gradually more unsettled during the last ten days of the month, with rain or showers and some very strong winds at times.

The mean temperature for the month was equal to the 1981-2010 average, with little spatial variation relative to normal. Rainfall overall was 76% of average; it was driest across the south and south-east, with less than a third of normal in a few spots, but a little wetter than average across parts of the north-west. Sunshine amounts were well above average in many areas, with 119% of average sunshine overall.

1st to 3rd:

The 1st saw scattered showers in the north in the morning, before a band of more organised rain spread from the west in the afternoon. The 2nd was a showery day, often with sleet and snow driven on by a brisk north-west wind, but with some sunshine too. The showers became more scattered on the 3rd but were still often wintry, and Malham Tarn (North Yorkshire) recorded a snow depth of 17 cm.

4th to 15th:

A ridge of ridge of high pressure resulted in a mostly fine day on the 4th with only very isolated showers in the north-west. The 5th was mainly dry with sunny spells, and temperatures recovering to average for the time of year. The 6th was another dry day with sunny spells. The 7th was again mainly dry and bright with a brisk westerly wind and temperatures in the south-east reaching 17 °C. A band of rain spread from the west during the morning of the 8th, reaching eastern areas in the afternoon, but the far north remained dry. After a clear and frosty start on the 9th, rain quickly spread in from the west, becoming more patchy as it reached the east later in the day. The 10th saw a ridge of high pressure to the south, giving a mainly dry and sunny day. The 11th started with a frost for northern areas but a band of rain edged in from the west during the morning, slowly moving east during the afternoon. A dry start on the 12th but rain spread slowly from the west during the afternoon, stalling over central areas. This rain spread west again on the 13th, pushed by a colder easterly wind, but weakened as it reached the south-west. Dry and bright on the 14th, with a ridge of high pressure over the south. Many areas remained dry on the 15th with the best of any sunshine in the west but scattered light showers developed in southern areas in the afternoon.

16th to 23rd:

The 16th was mainly dull and damp with outbreaks of rain in many areas. Rain was restricted to eastern and some central areas on the 17th with the west mainly dry and bright. The 18th was dry and bright for many western areas but cloudier further east. It remained dry on the 19th with more sunshine. It was dry and sunny during the morning of the 20th but cloud and outbreaks of light rain reached northern areas in the afternoon. It was mainly dry and bright on the 21st with only some light, scattered showers in the south east. High pressure remained in control on the 22nd resulting in another dry day with plenty of sunshine. The 23rd was generally more cloudy with scattered showers mainly in the west and south.

24th to 31st:

By the 24th it felt colder in a north-west wind, with sunshine and widespread showers. The 25th was mainly dry with sunny spells, although rain reached the far west during the evening. Overnight rain cleared eastern areas during the morning of the 26th to leave sunny spells and scattered showers. The 27th was largely dry and bright, although patchy rain reached the far south-west later in the day. The 28th was more unsettled than of late, but mild, with showers or longer spells of rain for many areas driven on by a strong westerly wind. The 29th remained unsettled with widespread showers, some heavy with thunder in East Anglia. After a mainly dry and bright morning on the 30th, rain spread from the west during the afternoon with winds increasing to give gusts of around 60 mph in western areas. The 31st brought sunshine and showers, and very strong north-west winds, with exposed locations seeing gusts of up to 70 mph.

Wales diary of highlights

After a showery start to the month, it became more settled for a time, but the latter part of the month became more unsettled, bringing rain or showers and increasingly strong winds.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.2 °C below the 1981-2010 average. It was a rather dry month towards the south, and the overall rainfall total was 83% of average. Southern parts were also quite sunny, with 120% of long-term average sunshine hours for Wales overall.

1st to 3rd:

The 1st was generally dry, with some sunshine at first, but rain spread from the west by midday and cleared most of Wales by late afternoon. There was sunshine and showers on the 2nd with a moderate to strong westerly wind. Rain in the early hours of the 3rd cleared quickly to sunshine and showers for the rest of the day.

4th to 7th:

The 4th was largely sunny, with just an isolated shower. It was dry on the 5th too, but there was no sunshine except in the south-east. It was milder on the 6th and 7th with some sunshine, but cloudy on the north coast.

8th to 16th:

It was wet from early morning until early afternoon on the 8th, but with some sunshine after that. Rain in the morning of the 9th became fragmented, and it was drier in the afternoon. By the 10th pressure had built, so the day was dry and sunny. Patchy rain edged east through the morning and early afternoon of the 11th, and it remained cloudy thereafter. The 12th was cloudy too, with rain moving slowly from the west from mid-morning onwards. On the 13th, rain slowly moved east and south through the morning, followed by a cloudy afternoon. The 14th and 15th were dry, but cool and overcast. The 16th was dull, with light showers at times, merging into more organised rain for the afternoon and evening.

17th to 31st:

Isolated showers at first on the 17th soon died out, leaving a sunny and warmer day. The period from the 18th to the 22nd was dry with long spells of sunshine but cool nights. The 23rd had variable amounts of cloud, with isolated light showers during the afternoon. There was sunshine on the 24th, but showers developed and became heavier and more frequent in the afternoon. The 25th was dry and sunny until the late afternoon when cloud increased from the west to bring rain for the evening. The rain moved away eastwards early on the 26th to leave the rest of the day dry with some sunshine. The 27th was generally dry but mainly cloudy. Mainly cloudy on the 28th, with some rain around the middle of the day. The 29th had rain through the morning, but it was drier by the afternoon. Rain spread from the west on the 30th, with gale-force winds gusting to over 70 mph on the coast and 97 mph at Capel Curig (Gwynedd). It remained unsettled and very windy on the 31st with showers, some of which were wintry and with thunder; winds gusted to around 60 mph generally and up to 86 mph at Capel Curig.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month began cold, very windy and unsettled with snow across high ground. A succession of active depressions brought rain and strong winds, especially to western areas, but the weather did settle down by the middle of the month and it was milder with sunshine at times. However, it again turned unsettled and windy again towards the end.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall overall was 122% of average, but ranged between 150% in some western localities and only 50% in parts of Aberdeenshire. Sunshine amounts were 118% of average overall.

1st to 3rd:

A blustery day on the 1st with strong to gale-force winds and frequent showers of hail, sleet and snow for most areas, though it stayed mostly dry in the north-east. The 2nd was cold, again with gale-force winds, and rain, sleet or snow for most areas, especially the west. Continuing cold and windy on the 3rd with rain, sleet or snow for most areas, although Aberdeenshire was mainly dry.

4th to 12th:

Breezy on the 4th with some scattered showers in the north and west, but dry and bright in the east. Windy again on the 5th, but mainly dry in the east; heavy rain spread into the north-west during the morning and then further south through the day. Another very windy day on the 6th with more heavy rain in the north-west - Cluanie Inn (Highland) recording 102.8 mm and a peak gust of 73 mph was recorded at Edinburgh, Blackford Hill - but it was generally dry in the south and east. Very windy again on the 7th, with another 75 mph gust recorded at Edinburgh, Blackford Hill, and persistent heavy rain in the west with 100.0 mm recorded at Achnagart (Highland), but rain was lighter further east. Winds were still quite strong on the 8th, with showers or longer spells of rain for many areas, but clearer conditions spread to the east later in the day. Rain soon began to spread across from the west on the 9th, and winds increased to gale-force for most of the country, with a gust of 89 mph recorded at South Uist (Western Isles). It was quieter on the 10th, with a few showers, mainly in the west, gradually dying out in the afternoon. A bright start for the east on the 11th but the next weather system brought strong to gale-force winds and rain to all areas through the day, though the rain remained light and patchy in Moray. After a dry start on the 12th, strong winds and heavy rain spread from the west, but again the rain was more limited in parts of the north-east.

13th to 23rd:

Most of the country was dry and bright on the 13th, but the east coast was cloudy with rain at times. Generally dry but cloudy for most areas on the 14th, but much brighter in the north-west. It was dry again on the 15th, cloudy in the south but brighter in the north. Showers or longer spells of rain in the south and east on the 16th but mostly dry in the north-west, and feeling cold in the easterly wind. The 17th was cloudy and overcast, with some light rain or drizzle especially in the east, but brighter and more pleasant in the north-west. There was an east-west split on the 18th, cloudy with mist or fog at times in the east but brighter in the west. There were showers or longer spells of rain in the north, and in the west later, on the 19th, but it was brighter and mainly dry in the south-east. It was mainly dry at first on the 20th, but showers became more widespread in the afternoon. It was dry with bright or sunny intervals on the 21st. There was rain in the north and north-east on the 22nd, but dry in the south. Showers in the north and west on the 23rd became more frequent during the afternoon.

24th to 31st:

Frequent showers of rain and occasionally sleet or hail on the 24th became more widespread through the day, merging into longer spells of rain for some areas. Dry and bright on the 25th, but rain edged into the far west by early evening. After a wet start in the east on the 26th, the rain cleared most areas by late morning and it then became more showery. Mainly dry in the east on the 27th but with some scattered showers in the west. Rain on the 28th cleared later and became more showery, but with gale-force winds across the country and a gust of 66 mph recorded at Lossiemouth (Moray). There were showers or longer spells of rain for most areas on the 29th. Winds were gale-force on the 30th with rain spreading across the country through the day and sleet or snow on higher ground. It remained very windy overnight and through the day on the 31st, with frequent blustery showers for all areas falling as sleet or snow on higher ground.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The first few days were unsettled, and from the 6th to the 12th it was mostly windy with some heavy rain. After a more settled spell, there was further rain and strong winds at times towards the end of the month.

The mean temperature for the month was 0.3 °C below the 1981-2010 average. Rainfall amounts were mostly near normal, with 106% of the long-term average overall. Despite often unsettled weather, it was a sunnier than average month, with a sunshine total 137% of average, the sixth sunniest March in a series from 1929.

1st to 5th:

Strong to gale-force westerly winds fed showers, some wintry, across all areas on the 1st, with a peak gust of 54 mph at Ballypatrick Forest (County Antrim). On the 2nd and 3rd, after early frosts, there were showers and longer spells of rain, with snow on high ground. The 4th saw scattered showers at first, but these gave way to a dry, sunny, and milder afternoon. It continued mainly dry and sunny on the 5th.

6th to 12th:

Strong winds accompanied an area of rain which moved southwards on the 6th. Rain spread from the west during the morning of the 7th, with some strong gusts of wind in the south, but temperatures reached 15 °C in the south-east. There were further rain and heavy showers on the 8th. Low pressure brought gale-force westerly winds and rain to all areas on the 9th, the wind gusting up to 70 mph on some coasts. The 10th was a fine and dry day, but this proved short-lived as it was windy on the 11th, with bands of rain, heavy at times, moving quickly north-eastwards through the morning. This was followed by a dull wet day on the 12th.

13th to 22nd:

The 13th was a mainly dry, sunny day. The 14th and 15th were cooler and cloudier, with a few spots of rain in the east. The 16th to the 18th saw variable amounts of cloud with some spells of sunshine, predominantly dry but occasionally cloud thickened enough to give a few spots of rain in places. A dry, bright day on the 19th but a weak front brought some light rain in the evening. The 20th was a day of sunshine and scattered light showers. Some light rain at first on the 21st, mainly in the north, but sunny elsewhere. The 22nd was mainly dry and sunny.

23rd to 31st:

The 23rd was a day of sunshine and showers with fresh westerly winds. The 24th was bright too, with showers and lighter northerly winds. A mainly dry day on the 25th. Rain and strong winds overnight led into a showery day on the 26th, but a mainly dry day followed for the 27th. Wet with strong to gale westerly winds overnight gave way to showers on the 28th, before further rain arrived during the evening. Rain cleared by morning on the 29th but there were showers for most of the day, and westerly winds continued strong to gale-force. Showers at first on the 30th, with more general rain for the second half of the day. The 31st saw strong to gale-force north-westerly winds, and showers, some wintry.

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Met Office